

FALL REMINDER
KEEP LEAVES OUT OF THE STREET



Did you know leaves are one of the main causes of poor water quality in the metro area?

When leaves enter storm sewers, they travel into ponds and lakes, causing excess algae growth that severely impacts the health of the water. In addition, leaves block storm drains and can cause flooding in neighborhoods.

As you rake or blow the leaves in your yard this fall, be sure to keep them off the street and out of storm drains. You can also help protect our water bodies by removing leaves and other debris from nearby storm drains.

When cleaning up, remember to use compostable bags for yard waste. As of 2010, per a new state law, plastic bags once used to collect fall leaves are no longer accepted by many garbage haulers, including those in Bloomington.

For more information, call Environmental Health at 952-563-8934.

STOP STORMWATER IN ITS TRACKS
PREVENTING RUNOFF PROTECTS THE ENVIRONMENT



Stormwater that runs off hard surfaces, such as rooftops, roads and driveways, can harm lakes and wetlands through the pollutants it carries.

Stormwater runoff can also cause flooding and increases erosion.

You can make a difference by stopping stormwater where it drops and preventing excess water from running off your property. Once slowed down, water soaks into the ground, evaporates or can be collected and reused for gardening. Follow these easy and economical techniques to stop and infiltrate water:

- Use downspouts to direct water onto lawns. Having water run off your roof and spread across the lawn will allow the water to infiltrate your soil.
- Use a rainwater barrel to capture water from roofs. An 80-gallon barrel emptied regularly can capture 3,275 gallons of water per year.
- Plant a rainwater garden. A 100-square-foot rainwater garden can capture 9,000 gallons of water per year. Native plants in a rainwater garden increase infiltration and attract a variety of birds and butterflies.

For more information, contact Engineering at 952-563-4870.

WEBSITE KEYWORD: SUSTAINABILITY.

Earth Action Heroes protect the earth. Whether it's saving energy or guarding Bloomington's precious natural resources, these individuals are making a difference. Here are your neighbors in action...

EARTH ACTION HEROES
SOLAR POWER SUPERSTARS

When it comes to reducing their carbon footprints, Bloomington residents Brian Henning and Melissa Gross think the sky, or more specifically the sun, is the limit.

The two, who have been married four years, recently started recognizing major energy savings with the solar panel system they installed at their Bloomington home last summer. The couple's south-facing home, which features external solar strips on its roof, is ideal for converting solar power into usable energy.

"The power of the sun was there for our taking," Henning said. "We just needed to harness it."

Henning said a solar panel system is great for families who plan on living in their current home for a long time, as the system pays for itself within 12-15 years, depending on energy prices. Henning points to the energy rebates and tax incentives

his home receives as the driving factor behind the installation of the system.

The panels convert the sun's rays into electricity for the couple's home, and when they produce a surplus, the extra energy is bought by Xcel Energy, thus lowering energy costs for everyone.

"Any electricity that we don't use gets sent to an electrical grid to be used by others," Henning said. "In the summer when the days are longer and sunnier, I enjoy getting our electricity bill to see how much we are saving."

Henning and Gross' sustainable and energy-saving practices don't stop at solar panels on the roof. Their home is also outfitted with a solar oven, a geothermal heating and cooling system, a patio and furniture made from recycled milk jugs and a meter that tells them how much energy they are producing. Adding to their list of sustainable practices, the couple uses their table



scraps as compost in their garden, which is watered by a rainwater barrel. When they aren't eating fruits and vegetables from their own garden, they shop at food co-ops and the Bloomington Farmers Market, eating organically grown food whenever possible.

"I wouldn't say that I have encouraged other residents to do what we have done, but people have actually stopped by to ask us about our solar panel system and I am always happy to tell them about it," Henning said. "Everyone has to make their own decision on whether solar panels make sense for them or not. Our Bloomington home just happened to be a great fit."

A CLEAN SWEEP
NEW STREET SWEEPER BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



The City's annual street sweeping program is getting cleaner – and greener – with the addition of a regenerative air sweeper.

The sweeper removes fine sand and silt better than mechanical sweepers by using a controlled blast of air to dislodge debris from the street's surface. All debris that is picked up is then directed up a heavy-duty suction hose into a collection bin. The regenerative air feature means the sweeper never exhausts polluted air into the atmosphere like a vacuum sweeper.

The street sweeping program is part of the City's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program. Street sweeping not only beautifies the city; it prevents debris from entering the City's stormwater system and polluting nearby water bodies.

For more information, contact Public Works at 952-563-8767.

EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABILITY

PRAIRIE HOME COMPANIONS
CITY CULTIVATES NATURAL LANDSCAPES

You may have noticed a large swath of brown grass on the east lawn of Bloomington Civic Plaza. That's because turf on the east and north sides of the building and along James Avenue in front of the Public Works building is being transformed into prairie areas full of wildflowers and native grasses.

The process began in July with killing turf grass to make room for planting seeds and seedlings.

"Although it may not look like much now, in a year or two these areas will be filled with 26 different varieties of wildflowers and six types of prairie grasses," Assistant Maintenance Superintendent Paul Edwardson said.

"The City's Prairie Restoration Program has been protecting and preserving Bloomington's 27 naturalized prairie areas for more than 15 years. It is only natural that the program would extend to City buildings."

Edwardson, who will oversee maintenance of the prairie areas once they are installed, describes the restoration as a return to the type of Minnesota landscape seen 100 years ago.

"In the long term, these areas will not only look beautiful and attract birds and butterflies, but they will require far less maintenance and resources than turf."

For more information on the City's sustainable practices, visit the City's website or call Paul Edwardson at 952-563-8762.

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